



Arizona Department of Education  
Tom Horne, Superintendent of Public Instruction

## Arizona Adult Education Distance Learning Guidance

### Setting the State Context

**Background.** According to the U.S. Census (2000), 819,000 (20.4%) adults in Arizona lack a high school diploma and 246,168 adults cannot communicate effectively in English; however, the State's adult education system only serves approximately 35,000 learners a year. Distance education is looked to as one way to increase the capacity of the system by expanding access to educational opportunities for adult learners using distance learning strategies to eliminate barriers and extend learning beyond traditional classroom settings.

In the spring of 2004 the State joined Project IDEAL and began the implementation of the Arizona Distance Education for Adult Learners (ADEAL) Initiative. In program year 2004/2005, seven pilot projects applied and were funded to provide GED preparation via distance education. Over the course of three years, these pilot projects served over 1,000 adult learners throughout Arizona.

For program year 2007/2008, the decision was made to go statewide with distance education. The statewide implementation of ADEAL utilizes a *collaborative* approach. There are eight state-funded/state-authorized DL providers throughout Arizona. Each of these agencies is required to form formal collaborative agreements with the "non-DL" providers in order to provide DL services statewide. The non-DL providers agree to provide referral to a DL provider and face-to-face services for adult learners who request and would benefit from distance learning opportunities, and the DL providers agree to provide instruction at a distance.

**Data about Distance Learning.** Data collection and analysis is a critical component of the implementation of ADEAL. During the pilot phase, the student outcome data was invaluable in helping assess the projects and in planning for improvements.

#### ADEAL Pilot Data: FY05 – FY07

- ◆ # of learners recruited: 1,170
- ◆ # of learners enrolled (12+ hours): 569
- ◆ # of instructional hours for enrolled learners: 27,457
- ◆ # and % of enrolled learners post-tested: 317 (56%)
- ◆ # and % of enrolled learners completing an educational level: 228 (40%)
- ◆ # of enrolled learners placed in employment: 37
- ◆ # of enrolled learners retaining employment: 91
- ◆ # of enrolled learners entering post-secondary or other training: 16
- ◆ # of enrolled learners obtaining a GED: 116

The median number of hours for enrolled students was also examined each year (FY05 median hours = 26, FY06 median hours = 35, FY07 median hours = 28). This data element, along with the number and percent of learners post-tested, helped identify the need to improve retention as a priority.

In addition to student outcome data, a survey of teachers regarding their experiences with distance learning was conducted by Project IDEAL each year and anecdotal data was collected by the State in each project's final report.

As implementation of distance learning services occurs statewide, data gathering and analysis continues to be critical. In addition to the above data, the outcomes of students who access DL services through the referral process from non-DL, collaborative agencies compared with students who access DL services through the DL agencies will be examined. Additionally, any significant difference in outcomes in hybrid DL classes compared with supported DL classes will be looked at closely.

***Overview of Distance Learning in the State.*** In Arizona, distance education opportunities for adult learners have been implemented statewide through a collaborative process between DL providers and non-DL providers:

- ◆ Adult education providers must apply to become a state-funded, state-authorized DL provider. As part of the application, potential DL providers must agree to formally collaborate with non-DL providers in order to provide DL services to learners who request and will likely benefit from distance learning opportunities.
- ◆ All state-funded adult education providers must agree to formally collaborate with authorized DL providers by providing referral and face-to-face services (i.e., intake, orientation, assessment, instructional support) as necessary to appropriate distance learners and potential distance learners, in collaboration with a state-funded, state-authorized DL provider.
- ◆ All state-funded, state-authorized DL providers must agree to provide instructional services via distance strategies to appropriate learners, including those learners referred by non-DL providers.
- ◆ The State's data collection system will allow any and all state-funded adult education providers (DL and non-DL) in which a student is affiliated to have access to applicable student records for the purpose entering data and running reports. *Confidentiality requirements as defined by FERPA shall be maintained.*
- ◆ The State's data collection system will allow any and all state-funded adult education providers (DL and non-DL) in which a student is affiliated to receive credit for student outcomes, while ensuring that these outcomes are never double counted at the statewide level.

***Contact Information.*** For more information about Arizona Distance Education for Adult Learners, contact Sheryl Hart at [sheryl.hart@azed.gov](mailto:sheryl.hart@azed.gov) or (602) 364-2707.

## **General Distance Learning Requirements**

***Defining Distance Education.*** Distance education is a formal learning activity where students and instructors are separated by geography, time, or both for the majority of the instructional period. Distance learning materials are delivered through a variety of media including, but not limited to, print, audio recording, videotape, broadcasts, computer software, web-based

programs, and other online technology. Teachers support distance learners through communication via mail, telephone, e-mail, or other online technologies and software.

**Defining Distance Learners.** A student is classified as a distance learner if the majority of hours credited to the student are considered distance contact hours as opposed to face-to-face contact hours. Face-to-face contact hours and distance contact hours will be recorded separately. The decision about the student's status as a classroom or distance learner will be made at the end of the year and will be based on which category of hours is over 50% of the student's total attendance time. The student's hours in both face-to-face and distance situations will be included in the NRS report according to the NRS Guidelines for Distance Education Learners.

**Distance Learning Approved Curricula.** The following required curricula shall be used for distance learning instruction: MHC GED Integrated Online Solution and/or MHC PreGED Online. GED Connections, SkillsTutor, and/or PLATO may also be used to supplement the required curricula. In addition, DL instructors are encouraged to supplement with appropriate instructional material such as workbooks, Internet resources, teacher-made worksheets, etc. according to individual student needs.

**Measuring Contact Hours.** Students in distance education must have at least 12 hours of direct contact with the program before they can be counted for federal reporting purposes. Direct contact hours for distance learners can be a combination of face-to-face contact and contact-at-a-distance through telephone, video, teleconference, or online communication where the learner and program staff can interact and the learner's identity is verifiable.

In addition to direct contact hours, proxy contact hours for distance learners will also be collected. The manner in which proxy contact hours will be measured will vary depending upon the curriculum used. The chart below shows the Proxy Contact Hour (PCH) criteria and credit for each of the approved curricula.

Curriculum	Model	Criteria for Awarding PCH	PCH Credit	Validation by
MHC GED Integrated Online	Clock	System must track time and log out students after preset period of inactivity	Recorded time in system	N/A*
MHC PreGED Online	Clock	System must track time and log out students after preset period of inactivity	Recorded time in system	N/A*
PLATO	Clock	System must track time and log out students after preset period of inactivity	Recorded time in system	N/A*
SkillsTutor	Clock	System must track time and log out students after preset period of inactivity	Recorded time in system	N/A*
GED Connection	Teacher Verification	Video: Student self reports to teacher Workbook: Teacher determines % of work completed Internet Activities: Teacher determines work completed Internet Module: Teacher validates w/questioning whether student has engaged Practice Tests: Online and print based	Video: .5 hours Workbook: ≥75% of activities completed=4hrs; 50 – 74%=2 hrs Internet Activities: 1 hr per activity; total possible PCH = 43 Internet Module: 3 hrs per module; total possible PCH = 15 Practice Tests: 1 hr per test; total possible PCH = 22	Project IDEAL

\* Validation is not an issue because these curricula track time within the program.

If additional materials other than those mentioned in the above table are used to supplement the curriculum (i.e., workbooks, teacher-made worksheets, etc.), no PCH credit shall be awarded.

***Assessing Distance Learners.*** Distance learners must be assessed under the same guidelines as all adult learners in Arizona using approved standardized assessment tools. All standardized assessment must occur in secure, proctored settings. It is permissible to arrange for remote testing locations that are more convenient for distance learners as long as all state requirements concerning assessment are met.

## **Application and Approval Procedures to Operate a Distance Learning Program**

In Arizona, distance education opportunities for adult learners have been implemented statewide through a collaborative process between DL providers and non-DL providers. State-funded, state-authorized DL providers agree to formally collaborate with non-DL providers in order to provide DL services to learners who request and will likely benefit from distance learning opportunities.

State-funded, state-authorized providers of distance learning shall be determined by the Arizona Department of Education/Adult Education Services through an application process in which the applicant describes the following with regards to the delivery of instruction via distance learning:

- ◆ Assessment of Need
- ◆ Qualifications of Personnel
- ◆ Eligibility and Competency
- ◆ Coordination, Integration and Non-Duplication of Services
- ◆ Projected Outcomes
- ◆ Program Operations
- ◆ Class Schedule
- ◆ Detailed Budget

## **Funding for Distance Learning**

Distance learning is an instructional delivery method for providing literacy services, just as classroom instruction and tutoring are instructional delivery methods. Funding for distance learning services shall be done through assistance dollars in the same way that other instructional services are funded.

## **Training Requirements**

Personnel affiliated with DL providers are required to adhere to the same training requirements as personnel affiliated with any state-funded adult education provider. DL administrators and instructors must hold valid Arizona Adult Education certification. DL providers are strongly encouraged to use AdultEd Online's Distance Teaching Self Assessment as part of their evaluation process for screening potential new distance learning instructors. DL administrators, instructors and staff must participate in state required training. Additionally, DL administrators and instructors shall participate in DL-specific training such as Project IDEAL's DL101, DL102, DL103 and DL104. Experienced distance teachers are strongly encouraged to participate in ongoing professional development relevant to distance learning.